



NEWS RELEASE



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The Greatest gift of all: Giving

By Ron Elliott
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Lindsey Beck, (left) a Department of the Army civilian and USACE employee hands out pencils during a stop outside a neighborhood school west of Baghdad. (GRD Photo by Ron Elliott).

BAGHDAD – The old saying of “It is better to give than to receive” rings true for members of the Gulf Region District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq.

Because of the generosity of individuals and groups in the U.S., GRD is doing more than just brick and mortar reconstruction projects—they are touching lives and bringing smiles to Iraqi children. A GRD

team, headed up by the commander, Col. Dan Anninos, recently visited schools, hospitals and several neighborhoods this week to hand-out much appreciated school supplies, soccer balls, blankets and toys to children around Baghdad.

“The primary purpose of the visit was to see how well these facilities were being maintained and operated,” said Anninos.

Several of these locations were the sites of initial reconstruction projects GRD either built or renovated and turned over to the Iraqis.

"It was a great opportunity to take some of our employees to these sites and deliver gifts to the Iraqi children," said Anninos.

Lindsey Beck, a Department of the Army civilian and a facilities manager from Raleigh, North Carolina who is currently serving on her second tour in Iraq, said that going out into the community to distribute school supplies and toys to the Iraqi children is the best gift she could receive during this holiday season.

"It touches your heart when you see their smiles and how much they appreciated something as small as a stuffed animal or pencils," said Beck.

"I am so proud to be a part of the district team and all the tremendous reconstruction efforts [we] are doing, but to visit the children is truly a memorable event. The future is for the children," added Beck.

Earlier this year, GRD received more than 40,000 pencils from the Arlington Independent School District (AISD) in Texas. According to Veronica Sopher, the director of public information for AISD, the school district wanted to do something for the children of Iraq and decided to participate in the "Marking History" pencil drive.

"The response was tremendous," said Sopher in an e-mail. "In two weeks time, students, teachers, administrators and principals came together and donated over 40,000 pencils."

"Additionally, the shipping costs were covered by several local companies and by a local law firm—Perdue, Brandon, Fielder, Collins and Mott, LLP," said Sopher.

The Corps of Engineers has put the hard work and generosity of the Texas school district and other organizations throughout the U.S. to good use by making an impact on the hearts and minds of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children in schools, hospitals, orphanages and neighborhoods throughout Iraq.



Col. Dan Anninos, commander of the USACE Gulf Region District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers talks with students at Al-Zuhoor primary school in Baghdad. During a recent site visit, Anninos and a team of GRD employees handed out much appreciated school supplies, soccer balls, blankets and toys to children. (GRD Photo by Ron Elliott).



Col. Dan Anninos, commander of the Gulf Region District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hands out pencils to school children in Baghdad. The pencils were donated by students from the Arlington Independent School District in Texas as part of a "Marking History" pencil drive. More than 40,000 pencils were sent from AISD to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for distribution throughout Iraq. (GRD Photo by Ron Elliott).

There are 38 school projects ongoing countrywide and since the reconstruction effort began in 2003, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers has completed more than 1,130 school projects.

"These relatively inexpensive projects represent an absolute investment in the future of Iraq," added Anninos.

In addition to the schools, USACE has completed more than 4,500 projects focused on rebuilding vital infrastructure such as water supply systems, sewage treatment centers, electrical power plants,

hospitals and health clinics, housing and transportation networks, while simultaneously developing the capacity of Iraqis to operate and maintain these facilities long after U.S. forces leave Iraq.

As the members of GRD continue to make progress and make a difference in the lives of the people of Iraq, they are living out what Winston Churchill so aptly stated: "We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give."

The Gulf Region District, headquartered in Baghdad, Iraq is a joint effort comprising Civilians, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Contractors. GRD provides quality and sustainable engineering in support of civil/military construction in Iraq. GRS and its Iraqi partners are building a strong foundation for Iraq's future.

BUILDING STRONG® is the official slogan of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

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